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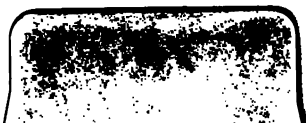
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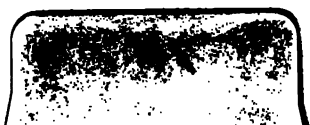


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A
PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION
OF THE
ALLEGED ANCESTRY
OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON;
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;
EXPOSING A
SERIOUS ERROR IN THE EXISTING PEDIGREE.

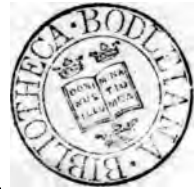
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AN EXPOSURE OF A SERIOUS ERROR IN THE PEDIGREE OF WASHINGTON.

BY JOSEPH LEMUEL CHESTER.

IN the year 1791 Sir Isaac Heard, then Garter King of Arms, compiled a pedigree of the family of George Washington, then the first President of the United States, and transmitted a copy thereof to him, asking his opinion as to its correctness, and requesting him to add to it any other particulars within his knowledge. To this communication Washington responded on the 2nd of May, 1792, thanking Sir Isaac for his attention, and sending certain information respecting the more modern history of his family, but confessed that it was a subject to which he had paid very little attention, and that he could not fill up with much accuracy the sketch sent him. This document, which was of considerable length, would now be almost priceless as an autograph, but it has unfortunately disappeared. A volume, containing the original letter and other collections relating to the same subject, passed subsequently, after Sir Isaac's death, into the possession of the late Mr. Pulman, Clarencieux. It was seen and examined by Mr. Jared Sparks when collecting materials for his biography of Washington, but cannot now be found.

Sir Isaac took as the basis of his pedigree the *Heraldic Visitations* of Northamptonshire, in which the Washington family was included. Starting with the well-known fact that the first emigrants of the name to Virginia were two brothers named John and Lawrence Washington, who left this country for that colony about the year 1657, he found recorded in the *Visitation* of 1618 the names of John and Lawrence, described as sons of Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave in that county who had died in the year 1616. The names being identical with those of the Virginia emigrants, and the period at which they lived not altogether inappropriate, Sir Isaac *assumed* their personal identity; and on this assumption constructed his pedigree, deducing the descent of the American President through this heraldic family of Northamptonshire from the still more ancient one of the

name in Lancashire. It is but just to the memory of Sir Isaac to say that he himself only regarded the pedigree as a conjectural one, and that he took the precaution to leave on the margin of his own copy a note (which was seen and copied by Mr. Sparks) to the effect that he was not clearly satisfied that the connection of the President with the Sulgrave family was or could be substantiated.

Some years afterwards when Mr. Baker was preparing his History of Northamptonshire he pursued, in reference to his account of the Washington family, a precisely similar course. Either he acted independently, basing his pedigree on the same assumption, or, which is most probable, he had access to the collections of Sir Isaac Heard; and, presuming that Sir Isaac had thoroughly investigated the subject, adopted the pedigree which he had constructed. Sir Isaac's explanatory note, if seen, was ignored, and Baker confidently published the pedigree with the statements that John Washington, of the Sulgrave family, was afterwards of South Cave, in the county of York; that his brother Lawrence was a student at Oxford in 1622; that both emigrated to America about the year 1657; and that the former was the direct ancestor of the American President.

This pedigree has ever since been received as authoritative by all historians and biographers, everybody supposing that both Baker and Sir Isaac Heard had established the connection and descents by unimpeachable evidence, and no one dreaming for a moment of questioning the accuracy of their statements.

The object of this paper is to prove that the conclusions of those eminent men, natural and reasonable as they may have been (which is not denied), were nevertheless altogether wrong—in other words, that the John and Lawrence Washington named in the Visitation of 1618 as the sons of Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave were not the emigrants to Virginia in 1657, and consequently that the former was not the ancestor of the illustrious President.

Other articles concerning the Washington family may follow this, but the present one aims only at the entire demolition of the now universally received pedigree, so far as the alleged American connection is concerned, and is published at this time

in the hope and belief that an interest will be excited among genealogists which may result in the discovery of the true ancestry of the great and good man whose memory is equally honoured on both sides of the Atlantic.

The first doubt cast upon Sir Isaac Heard's pedigree was, perhaps unconsciously, by President Washington himself, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that it may have induced the former to record the note already mentioned. The language used by Washington in one portion of the letter referred to is important and suggestive. He says: "I have often heard others of the family, older than myself, say that our ancestor who first settled in this country came from some one of the *northern* counties of England; but whether from Lancashire, Yorkshire, or one *still more northerly*, I do not precisely remember." Washington himself, when he wrote this, was about sixty years of age, and the memory of those older than himself, from whom he received the statement, must have reached back probably within half a century of the arrival of his first ancestor in Virginia. Traditions are valuable, or otherwise, as they are transmitted through the medium of ignorance or intelligence. In such a family as that of the Washingtons the original facts would be less likely to become perverted than if they had been successively communicated through persons of a less intelligent character. Taking the tradition, however, for what it may be worth, it is quite certain that Northamptonshire cannot be accounted "one of the northern counties of England." But Washington himself was perfectly clear upon this point, and, if his language means anything, it surely means that the county from which his first American ancestor emigrated, if not Lancashire, or Yorkshire, was one, as he says, "still more northerly." It must also be noted that he does not mention this locality as the ancient or original seat of the family, but says distinctly that his "ancestor who first settled" in Virginia emigrated from that county.

But, whatever may be the value of this testimony, the present object can be accomplished quite independently of it.

In order that all the references to the various persons hereafter mentioned may be perfectly comprehended, a copy of Baker's pedigree is herewith given, down to the generation including

John and Lawrence Washington, the two brothers in question. By reference thereto (*vide post*, page 14), it will be seen that Lawrence Washington, of Sulgrave, by his wife Margaret Butler, had issue seven sons and seven daughters. This enumeration does not agree strictly with the Visitation of 1618, which gives another son named Robert (said to have died without issue), and omits Barbara, one of the daughters named by Baker (evidently in error, as she was doubtless the one of that name mentioned two generations before as one of the daughters of the first Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave). This accords, so far as the number of sons is concerned, with the inscription on his monument in Brington church, co. Northampt. which, however, states that he had nine daughters. Three of these probably died at an early age, unless we accept Barbara (named by Baker), and Lucy, who, in 1633-4, was mentioned as headwoman (perhaps housekeeper) in the establishment of Lord Spencer at Althorp. The actual number of the children of Lawrence and Margaret Washington was seventeen, with the most of whom we shall have nothing further to do at present except to say that, as the marriage of their parents took place on the 3rd of August, 1588, and their father died on the 13th of December, 1616, it is not difficult to determine at least the approximate dates of their respective births, which probably occurred, so far as the sons at least are concerned, in the order in which they appear in the Visitation, viz.: 1. William; 2. John; 3. Robert; 4. Richard; 5. Lawrence; 6. Thomas; 7. Gregory; 8. George. Of these, George, the eighth and youngest son, was baptized at Wormleighton, in the county of Warwick, on the 3rd of August, 1608. Gregory, the seventh son, was baptized at Brington, co. Northampt. on the 16th of January, 1606-7, and was buried there the following day. Thomas, the sixth son, the writer has satisfactorily identified as the "Mr. Washington" (*vide* Howell's Familiar Letters) who was attached to the suite of Prince Charles on the occasion of his memorable matrimonial expedition to Spain. He died at Madrid in the year 1623, at the age of eighteen, which would establish his birth in about the year 1605. Richard, the fourth son, the writer has also discovered was apprenticed on the 7th of July, 1614, under the auspices of the Clothworkers' Company, to

one Richard Brent, of London. If apprenticed for the usual time, seven years, he would then have been about fourteen years of age, and, consequently, born about the year 1600. Between him and Thomas last named came *Lawrence*, the fifth son (the precise date of whose birth we shall establish presently), and perhaps one or more of their sisters. The three elder brothers, William, *John*, and Robert, were of course, therefore, born between the years 1589 and 1599, as well, probably, as some of the nine daughters.

This recapitulation of dates is not unimportant, as it affords another strong presumptive proof against the correctness of Baker's pedigree. If the two brothers John and Lawrence above named were the Virginia emigrants, the former must have been about sixty, and the latter not far from fifty-five years of age, when they quitted England. It certainly was not usual for men so far advanced in life to seek new homes in the colonies, and as it is known that both of the real emigrants married again after they had been some time in Virginia, and both had issue there, the improbability that they were identical with the two brothers of Northamptonshire becomes greatly increased.

It is, of course, unnecessary to dwell long upon the history of William Washington, the eldest son, whose identity, if not otherwise sufficiently established, would be so by the will of his aunt Elizabeth, the widow of his uncle Robert Washington, dated on the 17th of March, 1622-3, in which, among other legacies to her nephews and nieces, she bequeaths him 100%, and calls him "Sir William Washington." He was knighted at Theobalds on the 17th of January, 1621-2. He married Anne, the half-sister of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who, after that event, appears to have taken the whole family under his protection, and continued to advance their fortunes (which, at that time, were at a very low ebb), in various ways, until down to the very time of his assassination. Sir William is described, in 1618, as of Packington, in the county of Leicester, but appears afterwards to have scarcely had a permanent home anywhere. Two of his children were baptised at Leckhampstead, in the county of Bucks, and two at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, where he himself was buried on the 22nd of June,

1643. Lady Washington was buried at Chelsea on the preceding 25th of May. According to the Visitation of 1618, his eldest son, Henry, was born in 1615, from which fact an approximate date of his own birth may be readily derived. His other children were George, Christopher, Catherine, Susanna, and Elizabeth. In his will, which is dated on the 6th of June, only sixteen days before his burial, he gives his residence as "Thistleworth" (Isleworth), in the county of Middlesex, and directs that his "manor of Wicke," and "Wicke farm," shall be sold.

This manor was in the parish of Isleworth, and had been purchased in the year 1638 by Sir William Washington from the coheirs of Sir Michael Stanhope, but he was compelled to mortgage it in 1640 to Sir Edward Spencer and Sir Richard Wynne, and it was in the possession of the latter at his death in 1649. By a singular coincidence, Sir William Washington's father, at his death, held of Lord Spencer a manor of the same name in Northamptonshire.

We now arrive at the great point of interest in the present discussion, and the main fact, destined to overthrow the assumptions of Sir Isaac Heard and Baker as to the origin of the American Washingtons, may as well be stated at once. JOHN WASHINGTON, the second son of Lawrence and Margaret, and brother of Sir William, was also knighted. He became Sir John, at Newmarket, on the 21st of February, 1622-3. His identity may be established in several ways.

In a series of old account-books preserved at Althorp, which have been carefully examined by the Rev. John Nassau Simpkinson, Rector of Brington (whose interest in the subject, and whose kind assistance the writer begs thus publicly to acknowledge), and to some extent by the writer himself, there is abundant evidence to show that the most friendly relations existed between the noble family at Althorp and their neighbours and tenants the Washingtons. Evidence to the same effect is also to be found in several of the wills of the family, of which, in some instances, Lord Spencer was appointed supervisor. The Washingtons were a gentle family, although greatly reduced in circumstances, having been compelled to part with the estate of Sulgrave, upon which they retired to Brington. The Lord Spencer of that day, how-

ever, did not forsake his friends in their adversity. They had hitherto been his frequent guests at Wormleighton, and, on their settlement at Brington, were as cordially welcomed to Althorp. It may also be mentioned that the two families were more or less nearly connected by intermarriage.

The old account-books referred to were the steward's usual household books, and also some that were kept by a person who had charge of the grain given out daily for the use of the horses of the establishment as well as those of Lord Spencer's guests. These books record the frequent presence, as guests at Althorp, of Mr. Robert Washington (who died on the 10th of March, 1622-3, and who is last-mentioned shortly before his death); also of William, John, Lawrence, and Thomas Washington (evidently four of the sons of Lawrence and Margaret); Mistress Alice Washington (their sister); and also of the Curtises and Pills, with whom the Washingtons intermarried; but, which is more important, down to the 10th of November, 1621, William Washington is always mentioned as *Mr.* William, and on that date for the last time, re-appearing on the 30th of March, 1622, as *Sir* William. He had been knighted on the preceding 17th of January. After the 30th of March, 1622, down to the 11th of January, 1622-3, the two brothers are mentioned as *Sir* William and *Mr.* John Washington. The latter is never so designated again, but, on the 22nd of March following, the presence of *Sir* John Washington is recorded. He had been knighted between those two dates, on the 21st of February. Afterwards Thomas (who is last mentioned on the 12th of October, 1622) having died in Spain in 1623, the three brothers are always mentioned as *Sir* William, *Sir* John, and *Mr.* Lawrence Washington. There is abundant other evidence to show that these brothers were the sons of Lawrence and Margaret Washington, formerly of Sulgrave and afterwards of Brington.

The history of Sir John Washington was briefly as follows: and, to avoid numerous notes and references, the writer will simply remark that for every fact stated he has the evidences in his possession. He was first married, on the 14th of June, 1621, at St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, by virtue of a licence, to Mary, one of the daughters of Philip Curtis, gentleman, by Catherine his

wife, of Islip, Northants. The will of her mother, dated the 6th of December, 1622, mentions her as her daughter Mary Washington, and bequeaths a legacy of 50*l.* to her then only son Mordaunt Washington. She had two other sons, viz. John and Philip, and died on the 1st of January, 1624-5. She was buried in the church of Islip aforesaid, where her monument still exists, with the following inscription: "Here lieth the body of Dame Mary, wife unto Sr John Washingtō knight, daughter of Phillipe Curtis, gent. who had issue by hur sayd husbände 3 sonnns, Mordaunt, John, and Phillipe; deceased the 1 of Janu. 1624." The monumental inscription of her mother, Catharine Curtis, also in Islip church, states that by her husband Philip Curtis, gentleman, she had issue one son, Philip, and four daughters. This Philip Curtis married Amy Washington, one of the daughters of Lawrence and Margaret, at Brington, on the 8th of August, 1620. Of this connection there cannot be the slightest doubt, and as their wills are both otherwise important, as establishing the point at issue, full abstracts of them are here given.

That of Philip Curtis was nuncupative, and made on the 19th of May, 1636, in presence of Sir John Washington, knight, and another. He bequeathed 1,000*l.* to his daughter Catharine, when of age or married, and to his nephews John Washington and Philip Washington each 50*l.* when of age. His nephew Mordaunt Washington he commended to the kindness of his wife, to whom he bequeathed the residue of his estate, and appointed as guardians of his daughter the clergyman of the parish and "Sir John Washington of Thrapston, in the county of Northampton, knight." The will was proved on the 30th of May following by his relict Amy Curtis, and on the ensuing 27th of June she made her own will. After directing to be buried in the chancel of Islip near her husband, she proceeds substantially as follows :—

Whereas there was given to my nephew Mordaunt Washington, the eldest son of Sir John Washington, knt. by the last will and testament of his grandmother Curtis, deceased, the sum of 50*l.*, I now give to said Mordaunt 250*l.* more, to be employed for his benefit till he become of age or married. Whereas my husband, lately deceased, gave to John Washington, second son of Sir John Washing

ton, 50*l.*, I now give to said John, my nephew, 50*l.* more, to be employed to his use till he be of age, &c. Whereas my husband, lately deceased, gave by his last will to my nephew Philip Washington, third son of Sir John Washington, knt., 50*l.*, I now give him 50*l.* more, &c. Whereas my husband Philip Curtis, by his last will, gave me and my heirs for ever all his lands, houses, &c., I now give the same to my only daughter Katherine Curtis and her heirs for ever, as well as the residue of all my estate, and appoint "my dear and loving mother, Margaret Washington, and my loving brother, Sir John Washington, knight," to be her guardians.

One of the witnesses to this will is William Washington, doubtless Sir William her brother. Administration thereon was granted, on the 19th of November following, to Sir John Washington, knight, who is described as the "lawful brother" of the testatrix, and who was to act during the minority of Katherine Curtis, daughter of the testatrix and the executrix named in the will.

There could not possibly be a more satisfactory document than this, as the testatrix not only gives the name of her mother, but also distinctly states her relationship to Sir John Washington, which is legally confirmed by the Court of Probate.

The subsequent personal history of Sir John Washington, except that he married a second wife, is almost entirely unknown. Among the Royalist Composition Papers at the Public Record Office, in the case of the Earl of Northampton, there is an affidavit of a tenant who had paid 218*l.* to Thomas Farrer for the use of the said earl and Sir John Washington. Farrer responds, that what sums of money he had received out of the estate of James Earl of Northampton had been so received "as agent and on behalf of Sir John Washington, by virtue of an Extent which the said Sir John had on said estate in the county of Bedford;" whereupon, on the 23rd of February, 1653-4, it was ordered, "that a letter be written to Sir John Washington to pay in the money or show cause."

On the 14th of January, 1661-2, Lawrence Washington of Garsden, in the county of Wilts, esquire, made his will, in which he left an annuity of 40*l.* per annum to his "cousin John Washington, son of Sir John Washington of Thrapston, in the county

of Northampton, knight," the legal presumption from which is that both father and son were then living, and the former at Thrapston.

The registers of Thrapston, although embracing the period during which Sir John Washington is described as of that place, and the time of his death, do not once mention the name. He died, however, before the 6th of October, 1678, on which day Dorothy Washington made her will, and described herself as "relict of Sir John Washington, knight, deceased." She directed to be buried in the chancel of the church of Fordham, near her grandchild, Mrs. Penelope Audley. She bequeathed of her "small estate," 5*l.* to her son, Mr. Thomas Kirkbey, and 20*s.* to each of his sons and daughters, leaving the residue of her goods to her daughter, Mrs. Penelope Thornton, whom she appointed her executrix. No children by Sir John Washington are mentioned. In the Probate Act she is described as of Fordham, in the county of Cambridge, and the record of her burial, in the parish register of that place, under the year 1678, is as follows:—"Dame Dorothy, relict of S^r John Wassington of Thrapston, in the county of Northampton, knight, was buried the 15th day of October."

It is probable that Sir John had no issue by his second wife, and morally certain that none were living at her death, or she would scarcely have failed to notice them in some way in her will. Of the three sons by his first wife, John, we have seen, was still living in 1661-2. His eldest brother Mordaunt was visiting at Althorp on the 13th of February, 1640-1, but nothing further is known of him, nor of his youngest brother Philip, unless the latter was one of that name who was buried at St. Martin's-in-the Fields on the 26th of September, 1643.

We proceed now to the history of LAWRENCE WASHINGTON, apparently the fifth son of Lawrence and Margaret, and certainly the younger brother of Sir William and Sir John Washington.

Baker was quite correct in stating that he was a student at Oxford in the year 1622. He was of Brasenose College, and matriculated on the 2nd of November, 1621. The exact record in the Matriculation Register is as follows: "Laurent: Washington, Northamp: Gen. fil. an. nat. 19:" *i.e.* Lawrence Washington,

of Northamptonshire, whose father's rank was that of a gentleman, and whose own age was nineteen years at his last birthday.

It was not until little more than a year later that the officials commenced entering in the register the christian names and particular residences of the fathers of the students, but in the present instance the above record is almost as satisfactory as it would have been if the other particulars had been given. In the first place, the Washington family of Sulgrave, or Brington, was the only one of the name in Northamptonshire whose sons could be recognised and designated as the sons of gentlemen, unless, indeed, the Heralds of that time omitted others, which is not probable. Secondly, there was no other Lawrence Washington at Oxford for considerable periods before and after this date; unless, again, all the officials were guilty of omissions in all the Registers (for the writer has carefully examined them all), which is even more improbable. And, finally, the will of his aunt Elizabeth, widow of his uncle Robert Washington, dated on the 17th of March, 1622-3, among other legacies to his brothers and sisters, leaves him her husband's seal ring, and states that he was then at Oxford.

Lawrence Washington was born, therefore, about the year 1602. He appears to have entered at Brasenose College as early as 1619, but he did not sign the Subscription Book until the 2nd of November, 1621, under which date his name also appears in the general matriculation register, in connection with thirty-five others—an extraordinary number, and indicating that from some cause this ceremony had hitherto been neglected. He took his B.A. degree in 1623, and became Fellow of Brasenose about 1624. He is recorded as serving the office of lector, then the principal educational office in the college, from 1627 to 1632 inclusive. On the 26th of August, 1631, he became one of the proctors of the university, filling a vacancy that had occurred by the deprivation of his predecessor by royal warrant. On the 14th of March, 1632-3, he was presented to the then very valuable living of Purleigh, in Essex, and resigned his fellowship. The records of a suit in Chancery, preserved at the Rolls Office, perfectly identify the rector of Purleigh with the fellow of Brasenose and the proctor of the university. He continued at Purleigh

until the year 1643, when, according to Newcourt, he was "ejected by sequestration for his loyalty in the late rebellion of 1642," and had the honour of being pilloried in the infamous "Century." Walker states that he "was afterwards permitted to have and continue upon a Living in these parts; but it was such a poor and miserable one that it was always with difficulty that any one was persuaded to accept of it." The writer has been unable to ascertain the living mentioned; but it is to be hoped that some further trace of him may yet be discovered in the neighbourhood of Purleigh, where, putting the usual construction upon Walker's language, he continued in his profession of a clergyman after the Restoration, and consequently some years after the date of his namesake's emigration to Virginia.

We are now prepared to test the question of identity first raised.

Referring again to the facts that the John and Lawrence Washington of the Northamptonshire pedigree were respectively at least sixty-two and fifty-five years of age in 1657, the date of the emigration, and that both of the real emigrants re-married and had issue in Virginia—facts almost, if not quite, sufficient in themselves to settle the question without further dispute, especially as the evidences in the will of Lawrence of Virginia indicate that he was probably under thirty years of age at the time of his emigration—we may safely leave the issue to the effect of either of the following propositions,—

First. John Washington of Sulgrave and Brington was knighted, and became Sir John, while his brother Lawrence was a clergyman of the Established Church. If they were the Virginia emigrants the one must have abandoned his knighthood, and the other rejected his surplice and bands, for both were never known in Virginia except as "Esquires," or "Gentlemen," and by the latter appellation they described themselves in their wills. For either of these rejections there could have been no possible cause, as Virginia was then a loyal colony, and her established religion that of the mother country.

Secondly. Sir John Washington had at least two wives. The first, named Mary, was buried at Islip, in Northamptonshire, while the name of his widow was Dorothy, and she was buried

at Fordham in Cambridgeshire. John Washington, gentleman, the Virginia emigrant, states distinctly in his will, dated the 27th of September, 1675, that he brought his first wife from England with him, that she died in Virginia, and was buried with two children on his own plantation, and that his second wife's name was Anne, whom he appointed his executrix.

It is clear, therefore, that if John Washington, son of Lawrence and Margaret of Sulgrave, was identical with Sir John Washington of Thrapston, knight, he could not have been the emigrant to Virginia in 1657; and, as there cannot be the slightest doubt upon that point, the assumption of Sir Isaac Heard and Mr. Baker unquestionably falls to the ground.

On a future occasion the writer proposes to review the Washington pedigree more at large, and to present other more reasonable theories as to the true ancestry of the American President. He has accumulated a large amount of information from almost every source accessible to him, and believes that it embraces the real history of the family; but he yet lacks the positive clue that would solve the mystery, and enable him to reduce the chaotic material to order. He will be very grateful for even the most apparently trifling note concerning the name which may be transmitted to him through the Editor of this Journal.

(From Baker's "History of Northamptonshire," Vol. I. p. 513.)

JOHN WASHINGTON, of Whitfield, co. Lancaster. $\overline{\text{I}}$

